

WASHINGTON – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) and Congressman Joseph Baca (CA-43) announced that the Department of the Army will determine a way to honor a group of American soldiers held as prisoners of war at a Nazi work camp in Berga during World War II.

The decision marks a major step in a campaign to achieve long overdue recognition for a group of 350 soldiers held captive under cruel conditions in Germany in 1945.

As cosponsors of a congressional resolution (H.R. 889) introduced to formally acknowledge the service of the soldiers, Bachus and Baca asked the Department of the Army to consider honoring the veterans.

In reply, Deputy Assistant Secretary Lynn Heirakuji stated, “The Army is reviewing the circumstances outlined in your letter to determine an appropriate way to honor the heroism and sacrifice of these soldiers. We expect this review to be complete by March 6, 2009.”

Congressman Bachus said of the soldiers, “Their story is an integral part of the history of World War II, and their conduct under the most extreme and trying conditions an enormous credit to themselves and their country.”

Congressman Baca said, “As an Army Veteran myself, I was disheartened to learn that so many Americans were unaware of the sacrifices made by the soldiers at Berga.

The courage and perseverance they demonstrated in enduring such inhumane conditions is awe inspiring, and I am pleased the Army has opened a more extensive investigation into honoring these men.”

During the Battle of the Bulge, Nazi troops sent 350 captured U.S. soldiers to the Berga camp in Germany. Many were selected on the basis that they were Jewish or looked Jewish.

The soldiers labored under inhumane conditions.

Over 100 soldiers either perished at Berga or during a forced march connected to it, the highest number of American fatalities at any German camp.

It is believed only a dozen or so of the 250 soldiers liberated from the camp in April 1945 remain alive today.

A constituent of Congressman Bachus, Wallace Carden of Vestavia Hills, is one of the Berga survivors.

“In the decades since, Wallace Carden and his fellow soldiers have provided important personal testimonials about Nazi brutality and prejudice, so that

succeeding generations never forget the Holocaust and fully appreciate what it took for freedom to triumph during World War II,” Bachus said in a Congressional Record statement that was presented to Mr. Carden and his family during Memorial Day commemorations this past May.

The story of the Berga soldiers recently attracted new attention as a result of an emotionally touching series of reports on CNN. Bachus’ office has received numerous letters from around the country supporting efforts to honor the veterans, including one from the family of 89 year old Joseph C. Mark of New Jersey, a previously unlisted survivor.

